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IMPORTANCE OF THE SCIENCE AND OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF PREHISTORIC  
ANTHROPOLOGY.

By THOMAS WILSON.

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The International Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archeology held its Eleventh session in Moscow during August, 1892. This Congress was organized and has been holding its regular sessions since 1865 or '67. It has had delegates from all neighboring countries; they have usually met in the capital of the country, and never twice consecutively in the same country, with a number of members varying from 500 to 1500, according to the contiguity of the place of meeting. Their bulletins have formed volumes of several hundred pages (that at Stockholm over a thousand), yet no scientific organization from the United States has ever had any representative, and since the meeting in Paris in 1878 there have not been three citizen representatives of the United States at any one of the meetings. The same comparison continued with regard to the means of instruction in the different countries, America and Europe would make about the same showing. Each of the countries of Europe may, I think, fairly claim that they are equal to, if not ahead of, the United States in their appreciation of and assistance to the science of Prehistoric Anthropology; even little Switzerland, with a territory of 16,000 square miles, would say she was not behind us. France, with her area of 204,000 square miles, would undoubtedly claim superiority over the United States. The area of the United States is greater by far than that of all Europe, and its archaeological field, acre for acre, is equally rich in specimens, and would afford a proportionate number and a proportionately good opportunity for the study of the history of the prehistoric man, and yet I repeat, every country in Europe, if it but knew the exact status in the United States,

would claim that it was superior in interest and study of the science of Prehistoric Anthropology.

In the means of education in this new science the same comparison holds good between Europe and the United States. In the societies of the different countries, established for the advancement of science, a section is devoted to anthropology, as is done in the United States. But the ten different countries of Europe make ten different societies there against one in America. In France, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Scotland, and possibly in England, though I cannot say certainly, there have been courses of lectures organized and conducted in connection with the societies of anthropology and the museums (such as comprise my department), in nearly all the principal cities. I may mention that of Paris as the most extensive and complete, yet the others are of no mean proportion. In Paris the organization comprises eleven lecturers, each one lecturing once each week (eleven lectures per week), during the entire college season from October until June, all being upon the subject of Anthropology. The lecturers are paid for their services and they carry on their work continuously and with an earnest diligence for which we can find few parallels in the United States. The good effects of these lectures and of this education is manifested in the interest taken in the society which numbers at Paris nearly 700 members, with an annual income of 20,000 or more francs, and with a capital reserve of over 50,000 francs.

The following is the program of weekly lectures for the present year 1891-92.

Prehistoric Anthropology, M. Gabriel de Mortillet; Somatology, Mathias Duval; Geographic Anthropology, M. Fr. Schrader; Ethnography and Language, M. André Lefevre; Ethnology, M. Georges Hervé; Biologic Anthropology, M. J. V. Laborde; Zoologic Anthropology, M. Mahoudean; Medical Geography, M. Dr. A. Bordier; Physiological Anthropology, Dr. Manouvrier; History of Civilization, Dr. Letourneau; Comparative Ethnology, M. Adr. de Mortillet.

Any mention of similar efforts or labors in the United States would surely omit some institutions or persons despite

the best intentions and the greatest care, or might under- or over-rate those noticed.

Readers within the United States will be acquainted with these efforts, and it would serve no purpose to tell them what they already know. To avoid possible complications arising from unintentional omissions or misunderstood comparisons no statement of this work in the United States is attempted.

Enlarging upon this question of the comparative want of interest on the part of the United States Government and people, I might remark the number of missions which have been sent out by these European governments in pursuit of this science. In 1884-'85 France sent Dr. Poussie to Australia and India to make studies in ethnography, Le Bon to India to study primitive architecture, Jules Monsier to make archaeological researches in Caucasus, De Morgan to Armenia, Monsieur Brau to Malacca and Sumatra to make ethnographic collections, Gauthier to Turkey and Persia for researches in natural history and anthropology. Ernest Chantre, Curator of the Prehistoric Museum at Lyon, was sent by the Government to make anthropological researches in the Caucasus. He has published his report in five large volumes, quarto, with 446 figures and 140 chromo-lithographic or heliographic full page plates. M. Cartailhac was sent on a like mission to Spain and Portugal. His report is published in a large volume with 450 engravings and four plates. The most extensive and complete works, with the finest illustrations concerning our own country do sometimes come from the hands of these foreigners thus sent out. Weiner reports Peru, Lucien Briart the Aztecs, while the most comprehensive work on the subject entitled "*Prehistoric America*," is written by a Frenchman, Marquis Nadaillac.

The Curators of European museums are being continually sent to visit and examine other prehistoric museums than their own. In a report published by the keeper of the National Museum of Antiquities at Edinburgh, Dr. Anderson and his assistant, Mr. Black, is to be found a note of some of these visits. In connection with most of the principal archaeological museums on the continent, provision has been made

for enabling the officers and attaches of the museum to enlarge their knowledge in the lines of their specialties by travel and research. In 1842-'45 Worsaae was sent from Copenhagen through Sweden, Norway, North Germany and Russia; in 1846-'47 to Great Britain, and the result was the publication of his "Danes and Northmen in Britain," which is still the standard work. Mr. Undset, an attache of the Christiana Museum, was sent to Sweden, Denmark, Germany, France and Britain, as a result of which he published his "Norse Antiquities." Since then he has traveled over Europe and published his report, "The Iron Age in Europe," the standard book on that subject. In 1878-'79 Dr. Sophus Muller, an attache of the Prehistoric Museum at Copenhagen, was sent through Germany, Austria and Italy, returning through France and Britain. He studied the Zoomorphic Ornament in Europe and has published a complete monograph on the subject. Dr. Montelius, of the National Museum at Stockholm, was sent throughout Europe to study the "Fibulæ of the Bronze and Iron Ages." Sweden and Norway each set aside \$560 annually for similar purposes. The report of Dr. Anderson which I have just mentioned, was the result of sundry voyages made throughout Scotland, visiting the local archaeological museums for the expenses of which an annual appropriation of \$200 has been made.

The closer we examine and study the policy of the European governments and compare their achievements and those of their people and institutions with those of Government and kindred institutions in the United States, the greater the contrast. Take the laws of the various European governments for the preservation of by obtaining title to mounds, earthworks, caves, dolmens, and other prehistoric monuments. The most of the European countries have passed such laws. In England Stonehenge is under the care of the government, and Abury is in the same line if the transfer has not been actually completed. Denmark, Sweden and Norway own great numbers of prehistoric monuments. In France they are to be counted by the hundreds, while Italy probably surpasses all others. In Italy these matters have received most serious

consideration at the hands of the Government, and a complete system of laws are now in force providing for the proper investigation of these monuments, their preservation and the conservation of the objects found therein. Any person in the Kingdom making a discovery of archæological objects is required to make it known to the proper department of the Government at Rome. If he would excavate he must also notify the Government, and it will send an inspector who will supervise the excavation, keep a diary of all work done and a register of all objects found. This he does from actual observation, for he is required to be on the ground every day during the progress of the work.

At Corneto-Tarquini the excavations have been continued for twelve years, practically by the same band of workmen under pay of the town with a permanent Government inspector. All objects found are registered and reported to the Government. Nothing will show the contrast between the interest in these matters shown by the Government of Italy and that of the United States better than to tell the purpose of this register. It is that the Government may have control over the objects; that if they be desired by the Government for any of its museums it may have the prior right to purchase at a fair valuation, and if the objects be sufficiently rare and valuable from an artistic or scientific point of view it may prohibit and prevent their exportation and consequent loss to the country.

The United States, so far from having any such governmental control over or interest in any of the prehistoric antiquities, whether monuments or otherwise, has had no serious thought of such control. Neither the Government nor any of its officers or institutions have ever, to my knowledge, even considered a proposition for the purchase of any of these prehistoric monuments, and if they or any of them have ever supervised or inspected an excavation it certainly has not been with a view to purchase the objects that they might be displayed in any of the museums. No officer or institution of the United States has either power or authority to purchase real estate, whether it be a prehistoric monument or not.

No such power has ever been given by Congress, and our position to-day upon this subject is such that the Smithsonian Institution, which may fairly claim to be the representative scientific institution of the Government, cannot purchase any of our numerous prehistoric monuments for the preservation (as was done in the case of the Serpent Mound in Ohio) for want of the necessary legal authority. More than that, it cannot accept and hold the title to any such monument, however great its value or necessity of its preservation, even if presented as a gift.

In all the investigations and publications made by or in the United States concerning prehistoric man, the almost sole object of their investigation and report has been the American Indian. It was Indian first, last, and all the time. The Indian which they investigated was as modern and historic as he was ancient and prehistoric, and in the investigations the former view was kept more prominent than the latter; indeed the latter has been almost entirely overlooked. Even much of the investigation among the mounds has been to prove their modern construction, their relation to the modern Indian, and to show that if not entirely made since the discovery of the continent by Columbus, they have continued from such a short time previous as to be practically of that epoch.

These comments are not made in a spirit of complaint or reproach, but to confirm the statement that our Government and people have not taken the interest in prehistoric researches that has been exhibited by those of Europe. And the comparison has been forced upon the attention of the writer from a personal observation made during several years in European countries.

The duty of investigating prehistoric man of the United States clearly belongs to the scientists of our country. It is the history of our own people and country depending upon the investigations to be made upon our own soil; a studying, and if need be the excavation of monuments erected upon our own territory. If it is to be done at all it should be done by us. True, there is no legal obligation requiring us to make these investigations or perform this labor, and naught but

national pride and our own self-respect will compel it. We should here apply to science, the Monroe Doctrine of politics. We should recognize and declare our own ability to do this work, and our intention to perform it—that we may contribute to the science of the world a history of our prehistoric people. If the work is not to be done by us or if it be insufficiently performed it should not be because the matter was neglected or forgotten by either our government or people, but for the reason we decided it was not worth the effort, and in this way we must justify ourselves in the eyes of the world.

The sciences of Mathematics, Philosophy, Astronomy, Chemistry, Metallurgy, Classic Literature and Archæology, those general and not local, have recognition, but their claims rest upon other countries with equal weight as upon ours. Our country is under no greater obligation in respect of these and similar sciences than are other countries of the world. But in respect of the Prehistoric Anthropology of this country it is different. The duty rests solely upon us. The Smithsonian Institution and National Museum stand as beacon-lights to the American people, and are the representative scientific institutions of our country. In this regard they stand for the United States Government and speak for it. They have the ear of its Executive and of its Legislatures, and exercise an influence with the Government not possessed by private individuals or organizations; and, therefore, a certain responsibility rests upon them whether they will or not.

As a means of correcting the defect mentioned I would respectfully suggest the giving of greater attention to the dissemination of information among the people. This can be done through publications, by means of lectures and by the organization of kindred societies for concert of action and more expensive preparation at their meetings for the presentation of this subject in its proper light. I would also suggest the preparation of specimens illustrating the science of Prehistoric Anthropology, accompanied with descriptive letter press and catalogues,<sup>1</sup> these to be distributed to all institutions

<sup>1</sup>I have prepared during the past year, under the direction of the Smithsonian Institution, 100 sets of typical prehistoric implements for exchange.



of learning in the United States, receiving in exchange such implements and objects as are possible. Perhaps the most important factor of all would be the endeavor to increase the knowledge and interest of the executive and legislative officers of our Government so that the science of Prehistoric Anthropology would receive in the future their countenance and support.

Applying this argument, I suggest that if any department in the National Museum is to be extended or enlarged, is to have greater opportunities for research, more help employed, more money expended, either in publications, illustrations, investigations or in the purchase and display of rare or fine specimens it should be that of Prehistoric Anthropology rather than any other.